United Nations TD/517

United Nations Conference on Trade and Development

Distr.: General
5 August 2016

Original: English

UNITED NATIONS
DEPOSITORY

OCT 10 2016

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS
AT URBANA-CHAMPAIGN

Fourteenth session
Nairobi
17–22 July 2016

Moving towards an inclusive and equitable global economic environment for trade and development

Youth Forum Declaration

This Declaration contains the priorities and recommendations of youth who participated in the process of the fourteenth session of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD XIV) leading up to and including the UNCTAD XIV Youth Forum in Nairobi, Kenya, that took place from 19 to 21 July 2016. The document is the product of months of work, preparation, outreach, consultation, analysis and evaluations which have culminated in the Youth Forum and is based on previous online consultations, in-person meetings and interaction in the formal segments of UNCTAD XIV. The diversity of backgrounds represented at the first UNCTAD Youth Forum, as well as the online forum, is a major asset in itself for UNCTAD XIV. With over 250 participants from 70 different countries, along with 1,000 participants who contributed online, this provides a truly global view of the tools needed to operationalize the implementation of the 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development in terms of trade and development.

One country, one vote

1. One dollar, one vote is not the appropriate format for the deliberation of these issues. It is critical to continue and strengthen the UNCTAD mandate and integrated approach to the evolution and management of globalization and the interdependence of trade, finance, investment and technology as they affect the growth and development prospects of developing countries, impacting especially the lives of women and upcoming generations.

Quality education

2. Quality education that meets the demand of the workforce and society is a foundational investment for achieving the 2030 Agenda. The UNCTAD mandate should enhance lifelong learning opportunities and skills development that leave no one behind. These policies should leverage new technologies, indigenous knowledge and closing local skill gaps, both through formal and informal avenues, including peer learning. States must focus on equitable access to quality education regardless of economic, social, racial, gender, sexual orientation and gender identity or any other status.

GE.16-13589(E)
1613589

Please recycle

Barriers to education and collaborative solutions

3. Structural and institutional barriers to education include quality, affordability, accessibility and relevance. These barriers are influenced by a lack of access to funding (for the institutions and students), compliance with regulatory frameworks, lack of knowledge on priorities, lack of academic integrity, lack of formal recognition, and social and cultural norms, thus perpetuating inequity of opportunity and outcomes.

4. We ask for an integrated international accreditation centre to be developed in collaboration with accreditation bodies across regions or countries. This can also lead to developed countries creating partnerships with the least developed countries to share best practices to create enhanced education infrastructure. In addition to that, UNCTAD should also promote collaboration between public and private educational institutions in order to enhance the quality of education through sharing best practices in educating and resources to support Sustainable Development Goal 17.

Fostering conducive learning environments

5. The continued exclusion of women and girls, the increasing cost of investment in education and the gaps between skills and livelihood opportunities, along with community needs, need to be reversed. This includes meeting conceptual, human and technical skills alike.

6. As per the UNCTAD mandate, actions can be made to improve access to affordable quality education, as a key enabler to ensuring sustainable development, and overcome key barriers hampering effective knowledge transfer and appropriate skills building. This can be done through partnerships between Governments, education providers (formal and informal), industry and the workforce, youth and student groups and other relevant sectors that can effectively galvanize more conducive infrastructures for education.

Matching skills with needs

7. The mandate of UNCTAD needs to be enhanced to engage in capacity-building related to improving access to skills and knowledge that enable a more robust implementation of the 2030 Agenda, especially linked with sub-theme 3, and strengthened partnerships between education entities, employers, students and youth groups and other stakeholders through ongoing consultations, mentoring programmes, work-integrated learning programmes and research and development. The aforementioned tools are instrumental to identify potential gaps between skills developed through education and those needed for the economy and society.

8. Entrepreneurship must be encouraged by increasing business development resources for youth through the mobilization of private and public sector resources by creating incubators, mentorship programmes and investment.

9. Efforts need to be made to improve and increase exchange programmes to allow youth in the least developed countries to access education in sectors not available in their countries. This can be done by encouraging collaboration between educational institutions across borders.

10. Initiatives that enhance access to relevant practical skills and align school curricula to the requirements of the realities of the dynamic job market, societal benefit, and sustainable development should be put in place to promote both formal and informal skills building in education in order to appropriately prepare the capacities and skills of young people, while providing them with the necessary context and adaptability to build upon a strong foundation of practical tools.

11. We need education that builds livelihoods while empowering people, increasing equality and conserving the planet. This is particularly related to sub-theme 4.

12. With this, we ask that an international education blueprint to be developed in consultation with UNCTAD member States, United Nations agencies such as the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization and other stakeholders to outline a 15-year vision and strategy for education at a global level.

More and better jobs

13. In present times of alarmingly high levels of youth unemployment and underemployment, there is a collective challenge that needs to be addressed as a priority. It acquires further significance in light of the universal adoption of the 2030 Agenda. The full participation of young women in the workforce furthers these objectives.

14. We demand operationalization of Sustainable Development Goal 8, target 8.6 (on youth unemployment) and target 8.b (on global strategy on youth unemployment), of the Sustainable Development Goals. This is specifically related to sub-theme 4 and should be operationalized as such.

15. In order to ensure the best fit for purpose approach, we need to pursue multi-stakeholder cooperation between all economic and social partners including educational entities, Governments, civil society organizations, youth groups and employers. The cooperation could focus on the joint development of road maps and thematic content, access to financing and identifying gaps between community needs and livelihood opportunities through decent jobs, including entrepreneurship avenues. In addition to that, short-term visa skills programmes can be looked into to facilitate mobility among countries to help identify talents abroad to fill short-terms gap.

16. Deliberate efforts need to be made to change the process of measuring youth unemployment. The formal measurement of youth unemployment only counts young people between the ages of 15 and 24. Many young people have not even finished their education by then. This leaves behind a sizable population of young people, especially those most vulnerable; a correction should be incorporated into the UNCTAD work on statistical capacity.

State accountability

17. State accountability and better governance is one of the most important topics that emerged during the post-2015 process. It is also reflected in Sustainable Development Goal 16 as a stand-alone focus. State accountability is an indispensable precondition in order for UNCTAD to effectively work towards the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. Youth highlighted the main points which tend to better the relation between State and people and therefore enhanced State accountability.

Rule of law

18. The youth understand that the rule of law is integral to good governance and the appropriate exercise of public power. The rule of law dictates that all are held equally accountable under the law. The youth urge UNCTAD to promote this principle particularly with regard to those entrusted with exercising public power regardless of their position or authority.

Transparency

19. The youth recognize that accountability is not achievable without proper and complete information – inter alia, appropriate access to information in non-convoluted form devoid of unnecessary bureaucracy, a legal framework on transparency – relevant to

3 0112 115677400

matters in the public interest. Therefore, a requirement that all information should be presumed to be publicly available to stakeholders should be present. Policies and practices for transparency and accountability should be implemented at the local, national, regional and international level through an appropriate constitutional, institutional and regulatory environment.

20. State policies and practices should actively harness modern technological tools as well as traditional media where necessary in order to make information effectively accessible to all stakeholders.

International institutions

21. International institutions are particularly critical to ensuring effective State accountability across the themes that cover UNCTAD work. However, the youth acknowledge the specific circumstances of each country and thus the international community should act as a mere facilitator to ensure States are held accountable. However, with regard to matters that concern international institutions, we urge international institutions to exercise the full extent of their influence wherever possible to ensure States are accountable. One particular issue of concern that the youth have expressed relates to corruption surrounding the expenditure of loans from international institutions.

Local institutions

22. The youth recognize the important and valuable work that grassroots organizations, local leaders and other community-based groups undertake in holding States accountable for their decisions and actions and thus contributing to free, functional societies. Therefore, States should ensure safe spaces for civil society to operate in.

Tax cooperation

23. Finally, the youth acknowledge the issue of global tax cooperation and illicit financial flows, where UNCTAD has an imperative mandate. The youth urge the strengthening of the UNCTAD mandate to allow for the convening of conversations and action on the topic through more legitimate and inclusive avenues.

2030 Agenda and sustainable development processes

24. UNCTAD should build technical capacity among States to better implement and interlink the 2030 Agenda to other sustainable development processes (World Humanitarian Summit, disaster risk reduction, finance for development, small island developing States, sustainable consumption and production and the Third United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development) at all levels, as related to trade and development. We further welcome an enhanced science–policy interface, as well as improved coherence and synergy between the Commission on Science and Technology for Development and other technology structures, such as the newly adopted Technology Facilitation Mechanism.

25. Finally, as humanity ushers in a new age of sustainable development, young people have proven that they have the knowledge, experience and passion to make transformative and substantive inputs in every process they have been given a space to participate in. Certainly, young people have the capacity to help create and implement a more coherent and effective United Nations Conference on Trade and Development.